

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
APRIL 17, 2002**

The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) met by teleconference on Wednesday, April 17, 2002, at 11:00 a.m., Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). Chairperson Zonetta English of Louisville and Jefferson County MSD led the meeting. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. The purpose of the meeting was to address items of importance identified below.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Mr. Edward Kantor of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), called the meeting to order and reviewed the ELAB Charter. Mr. Kantor then presented Chairperson Zonetta English who introduced herself and took attendance. Joining the teleconference from the public sector was Mr. Gene Klesta and Stacey Kowackson of the Environmental Health Laboratory, South Bend, Indiana, Pat Phibbs, National Affairs, and Mr. Jim Pletl of the Hampton Roads Sanitation District. Ms. English then reviewed the agenda and commenced the meeting.

**REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The teleconference minutes of March 20, 2002, were reviewed and approved as corrected.

**REVIEW OF ELAB'S MISSION**

Ms. English asked Mr. Kantor to give a brief description of ELAB's mission and role to inform all of those who might be new to the Board. Mr. Kantor stated that the mission of ELAB is to give advice to the administrative EPA or the subordinates on establishing an accreditation program throughout the United States that sets minimum or basic standards for laboratory analysis. Some of these standards include what facilities they should have, the education of the staff, the equipment, and methodology. If these standards are met, laboratories can be accredited through a national program that will recognize them in any other state. The administrative contact for ELAB is Mr. Henry Longest, who is the only person ELAB may send recommendations to. Mr. Longest will further delegate recommendations as needed.

**STATUS OF NELAC RESTRUCTURING**

No significant changes to the general restructuring of NELAC have been made, though a few questions were brought up regarding the standards development groups. Ms. Jeanne Hankins informed the Board that Mr. Ken Jackson and Mr. Paul Kimsey are preparing an invitation to

various standards development groups to make presentations at NELAC 8 following the plenary opening session.

Ms. Hankins suggested developing a plan with the Board of Directors on what is needed regarding EPA's role and support in the restructuring of NELAC. Ms. English will contact Ms. Silky Labie to ask for participants from the Board of Directors that would like to help in drafting the proposal. A tentative version of this proposal will be introduced at the next Board of Directors meeting, which is May 9, 2002.

#### **REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS FROM FEBRUARY 20, 2002, MEETING**

***Status of Contacting State Laboratory Associations*** - Mr. Jerry Parr commented that ELAB is not solely limited to small laboratories, but rather with all non-participating NELAC laboratories. Mr. Parr feels that it would be premature to contact those organizations about what their needs are until we know more about why they are not participating.

A work group was formed to develop a Strategic/Business Plan for laboratories not participating in NELAC. Mr. Parr volunteered to get this started with the help of Dr. Michael Green, Mr. Wyeth, and Ms. English. Since a work group was formed, rather than a subcommittee, they are able to invite people outside of ELAB to help in their cause. Mr. Parr invited Mr. Pletl from Hampton Roads to join the work group and suggested Mr. Herb Brass from EPA Office of Water who is on the Methods and Data Comparability Board to be a participant. Members mentioned other names, which will also be considered. This work group will meet via teleconference to create a mission statement. Once a mission statement is created, Mr. Parr will submit this to ELAB members and anyone else who is interested.

***Letter from ACIL and Constitution and Bylaws*** - Ms. Hankins reported that she would send out the letter from The American Council of Independent Laboratories, regarding a conflict of interest, to each ELAB member. She will also send out to each ELAB member the draft of the Constitution and Bylaws. The final will be available May 6, 2002.

#### **REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS FROM MARCH 20, 2002, MEETING**

It was decided that starting a subcommittee to draft an appropriate letter to send to the EPA Administrator that captures all the discussion points be removed from the action item list. This was agreed upon by all members.

Dr. Kirankumar Topudurti was not present to address renewal timeframes of applications review and status; therefore it will be deferred until the next teleconference. He was to contact the AARB to obtain more information on the role it could assume in resolving the issue.

Mr. Jim Pletl has drafted a summary of suggestions and comments regarding membership from municipal and industrial laboratories in ELAB. He will send that draft to Ms. English.

Mr. Kantor is not able to advise the Membership & Outreach Committee to take a more active role in encouraging non-NELAC laboratories to participate in NELAC. Mr. Kantor has been advised not to take any assignments from ELAB. Mr. Robert Wyeth volunteered to complete this assignment. Ms. English would like Mr. Parr and Mr. Wyeth to draft some language to submit to the Board by the next teleconference for feedback.

## **DISCUSSION OF ELAB RECOMMENDATIONS**

***ELAB PBMS Subcommittee will consider developing critical review of PBMS initiative into journal article*** – This issue was presented on November 3, 2000, and was deferred to the PBMS group. A question was raised as to whether it should be an ELAB issue or stay deferred to PBMS. There are three members from ELAB that are working with Quality Systems on PBMS implementation and Standards language. It is not a formal activity for ELAB, though there is representation. There are no formal actions for ELAB to take regarding this issue.

***Auditor Training*** – Dr. Green had a concern with auditor training and questioned whether all current auditors had been properly trained under the new Standards. Ms. Hankins informed the Board that all assessors are operating under the 1999 Standards. All assessors have two years to complete their training starting from the time the first NELAC specified basic training course is offered. Nobody on the Board was familiar with when that date was, but thought it to be about a year ago. It was suggested to send a letter to the EPA representative asking the status of NELAC assessors and if they meet the requirements for being trained. States need to provide evidence to the EPA administrative representative that training has been completed and also provide a documentation trail. Rather than sending a formal letter of recommendation to the EPA, ELAB will request a response from either the Board of Directors or the Accrediting Authority to discover the extent of training of the state's assessors. Mr. Kantor will draft a letter to each of the twelve Accrediting Authorities via email regarding the degree of training their assessors possess.

***System for timely publication of accrediting authority decisions on the NELAC website*** – Ms. Hankins deferred this task for Anteon to complete at a previous meeting. It was suggested for this item to appear closed on the Resolution of ELAB Issues, but to remain on the list to monitor the progress and final completion. Ms. English stated that the issue will remain open with some recommended changes to the wording.

***Cleaning up the list of Resolution of ELAB Issues*** – It was suggested and unanimously agreed to eliminate from the list any item that has been completed. It is cumbersome to look through and only items that are still open and pending should be on the list.

***Move from MDLs to sensitivity demonstrations*** – It was debated whether this is apart of ELAB's Charter. It was mentioned that it does affect laboratory accreditation and is embodied in Chapter 5 Appendix C of the NELAC Standards. Discussion ensued regarding the issue and whether ELAB should take part in it or leave it for the EPA to decide. The EPA is currently reviewing the issue. No resolution was made regarding the stance of ELAB, but it was agreed to keep it open until more information is obtained.

***PT Issues*** – The status of this issue was questioned and debated of whether it should be left open. It was agreed to be left open, but to be postponed until all outstanding action items can be reviewed and prioritized. Once this is done, a work group will be formed to discuss this issue.

***Non-Laboratory Organizations*** – On May 24, 2001, it was suggested that ELAB would consider recommendations that NELAC BOD and EPA seek ways to reach out to other organizations to indicate that the scope of NELAC, as defined in the NELAC Constitution, includes non-laboratory organizations. It was suggested to close this item. After debate the Board agreed to list this issue as “Included in other active ELAB efforts.”

***Strategic Vision*** – Mr. Steve Billets charted the activity for a strategic plan in reworking the Charter of ELAB. A new Charter was created, but not a Strategic Plan. All members agreed to leave this item open, though no new progress was made towards a solution of writing a Strategic Plan.

***May 22, 2001, ELAB Open Forum*** – There was a question raised as to why this item is still open. Time did not allow further discussion and therefore will be kept open until the discussion can resume.

***ELAB to make recommendations to the Field Activities Committee*** – On November 3, 2000, ELAB proposed to recommend to the NELAC Field Activities Committee that they clearly define “sampling” and “field measurement activities” as well as to work with the NELAC Accreditation Process Committee to ensure that there is no overlap in the definitions. This is still an active debate in the above-mentioned committees. Though the issue has been deferred to these committees, it still needs to be monitored by ELAB. It will remain as an open status with the need for monitoring.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

## **NEXT TELECONFERENCE**

The next scheduled teleconference is Wednesday, May 15, 2002, at 11:00 a.m., EDT.

## **Attachment A**

### **ACTION ITEMS ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING APRIL 17, 2002**

| <b>Item No.</b> | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Date to be Completed</b> |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 1.              | Ms. English will contact Ms. Labie to ask for participants from the Board of Directors that would like to help in drafting a proposal regarding the EPA's role and support in the restructuring of NELAC. These participants will draft a proposal by the next Board of Directors meeting. | 05/09/02                    |
| 2.              | Mr. Parr to form a work group to develop a strategic plan for non-participating NELAC laboratories. Mr. Parr will also set up a teleconference for discussion on this issue.   | 05/15/02                    |
| 3.              | Ms. Hankins will send out the letter from the ACIL as well as the draft of the Constitution and Bylaws to each ELAB member.  | ASAP                        |
| 4.              | Mr. Topudurti to contact the AARB to obtain more information on the role it could assume in resolving the renewal timeframes of applications review and status issue.  | 04/17/02                    |
| 5.              | Mr. Pletl will send his summary of suggestions and comments regarding membership from municipal and industrial laboratories in ELAB to Ms. English.  | ASAP                        |
| 6.              | Mr. Parr and Mr. Wyeth to draft some language regarding the Membership & Outreach Committee to take a more active role in encouraging non-NELAC laboratories to participate in NELAC.  | 05/15/02                    |
| 7.              | Mr. Kantor will draft a letter to each of the twelve Accrediting Authorities via email regarding the degree of training their assessors possess.   | 05/15/02                    |

## **Attachment B**

### **PARTICIPANTS ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING APRIL 17, 2002**

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| Hankins, Jeanne<br>Director              | USEPA/ORD                         | T: 919-541-1120<br>F: 919-541-4261<br>E: hankins.jeanne@epa.gov                    |
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